

Coastal Planning in Georgia Basin: Baynes Sound and Malaspina Inlet Complex

Joe Truscott

Coast and Marine Planning Branch, Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management

Abstract

The British Columbia government is developing broad coastal use plans for sustainable tenuring decisions and plans designed to address specific coastal issues. This paper describes each type of plan undertaken in the Georgia Basin: a coastal use plan for the Malaspina Inlet Complex near Powell River and a Shellfish Aquaculture Action Plan for Baynes Sound between Denman Island and Vancouver Island.

In the Malaspina Inlet Complex intense resource use conflicts involving shellfish aquaculture, recreation and tourism, fisheries and upland development have existed for several years. The province led a public consultative planning process with federal, local and First Nations government participation. The resultant plan guides the management and allocation of marine aquatic lands, including intertidal areas, in order to increase land tenure decision-making efficiency and to guide the long term sustainable use of the coastal land and resources of the plan area.

Baynes Sound has been used for shellfish culture for many years. Increased technological development of the existing industry and interest in expansion has precipitated intense conflicts with upland owners and other resource users such as fishers and recreationalists, and has raised concerns from some area residents about the potential for environmental impacts. The Baynes Sound Plan used a science-based and consultative approach to address these conflicts by determining if and where future sustainable development opportunities exist for shellfish aquaculture and provided some measures to address issues with existing operations.

The Province of British Columbia (BC) along with federal and local authorities is responsible for managing more than 29,500 km of shoreline and seabed in the inshore and nearshore waters of British Columbia. The Coast and Marine Planning Branch (CMPB) of the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management (MSRM) has direct responsibility with regional offices for the design and delivery of coastal planning along with the coordination of policy related to coastal and marine issues within MSRM and among other provincial agencies. Coastal plans developed by CMPB focus primarily on the provincial jurisdiction of the foreshore areas and address economic development and diversification, environmental threats, land and resource conflicts, First Nations issues, and support informed decision making in coastal areas.

Over the past 13 years, the British Columbia government developed a number strategic land-use plans at a broad scale (e.g. from 1:100,000 to 1:250,000).. While most of these plans have been land-use oriented, two involved coastal areas of BC. These planning processes were consensual in that planning tables composed of stakeholder groups and First Nations representatives prepared the plans for review and approval by the provincial cabinet. Government agencies participated in the process to provide Geographical Information System mapping services as well as technical and policy advice. Through experience with this process the provincial government learned that the consensual approach can prove to be effective but, as a rule, requires extensive time (in most cases several years) and financial resources to bring plans to successful completion. Provincial agencies found that in the case of coastal strategic planning, it was especially difficult to achieve consensus and designations on maps because of the complexity of coastal resource management and polarized views among stakeholders and First Nations regarding aquaculture policy and management.

A New Local-scale Planning Process

In BC the province owns much of the seabed within the many bays, fiords, water bodies and the inland sea of the Georgia Basin. As seabed owner, the province requires most activities that occupy the seabed (including intertidal areas) or water over it to be under tenure. The extensive competition for areas of common interest by potential resource users as well as a demand for conservation of areas for ecosystem integrity and the demand from residents in coastal areas for maintenance of quiet and clear views and recreational areas has resulted in escalating coastal conflicts that do not seem resolvable at the strategic scale. In June 2001 the BC government decided to initiate a series of new local scale (e.g. 1:50,000 to 1:5,000) coastal planning exercises designed to primarily address tenure siting issues, but also to identify areas as potential candidates for further conservation and protection and in some cases to address specific issues. In the time that has passed since, MSRM has completed two coastal plans and has initiated six others.

These coastal plans involve a new approach to planning. They are “business case” oriented, whereby a plan is initiated on the basis of a request from a local area or in response to a need for guidance on tenure issuance. They are designed to provide a balanced outcome based on use of scientific information and analysis of environmental, social and economic values in an adaptive management context. They are designed to economically stimulate coastal communities, be flexible in process, product and scale to suit a planning area and be completed in a timely manner (9-12 months). MSRM staff lead and complete these Plans in collaboration with other provincial agencies as well as federal, local and first nations governments. The plans are approved at the ministerial or deputy ministerial level. While they are not consensual in nature, they do involve a significant public consultation component.

Types of Coastal Plans

MSRM staff prepare two types of plans on Crown foreshore and nearshore: Multiple Use Coastal Plans and Issue-Resolution Coastal Plans. Multiple Use Coastal Plans involve use of multidisciplinary information, multi-agency and stakeholder involvement and address a full range of tenuring programs and related issues. Most local scale coastal plans are the multiple use type. Issue resolution Coastal Plans are designed to resolve specific conflicts or issues associated with coastal land use and activities. MSRM is currently monitoring the implementation of one recently completed coastal plan for shellfish aquaculture in Baynes Sound and nearing completion of a second shellfish plan for Cortes Island. Both of these plans are within the Georgia Basin. For details on location of completed and in-process coastal plans the reader is advised to consult the following website: http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/rmd/coastal/planning/south_coast.htm

Product Application

Regardless of these plans, applications for specific coastal land tenures must all be referred to various approval agencies prior to application adjudication by the land Agency (Land and Water BC, Inc.). While these plans are not sanctioned under any legislation and do not prevent proponents from filing tenure applications anywhere, they do help to direct interests to those areas where they are more likely to receive approval for applications. These plans also identify areas to be reserved for further assessment for marine conservation. This helps to significantly reduce community and provincial conflicts, enhances efficiencies for Crown tenuring and licensing agencies and reduces First Nations work load and friction points.

Multiple-use Plan Products

Plan products include both a planning report along with resource and final plan maps that are made available in hard copy, CD ROM and posted on the MSRM website at the above address. The plans include a breakdown of the plan area into planning unit sections, each of which contains a detailed scale planning unit map depicting resource values, features and existing uses, along with a verbal description of values, current uses, recommended uses and activities as well as management emphasis and provisions. All potential uses that could theoretically be tenured by the province in the unit are rated for general tenure application as acceptable, unacceptable or conditional. Activities that are not tenurable by the province (e.g. commercial fisheries) are acknowledged and confirmed. Sensitive areas are reserved or placed under a notation of interest by the Crown land tenuring agency. The kinds of uses potentially tenurable by the province include:

- Shellfish aquaculture
- Finfish Aquaculture
- Marine Plant Aquaculture
- Log Handling/Storage and Infrastructure
- General Commercial
- Light Industrial
- Private Moorage
- Rural Development (float homes)
- Telecommunications
- Community and Public Utility
- Commercial Recreation (Guiding)
- Commercial Recreation (lodges and camps)
- Conservation

The management emphasis provides an overall “flavour” for planning unit tenuring such as “Community,” “Recreation,” “Conservation,” or “General Marine.” Not intended to be a zoning exercise, these plans do not exclude uses. Rather, they present a range of recommended uses for each planning unit.

The plans also include a socio-economic and environmental evaluation of plan provisions.

For an example of a completed Multiple Use Plan, the reader is advised to read the North Islands Straits Coastal Plan at the following website: http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/rmd/coastal/planning/north_island/nis/index.htm

One multiple use plan for the Malaspina Inlet Complex is currently in preparation within the Georgia Basin ecosystem. Terms of reference for this plan are available at the following website address: http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/rmd/coastal/planning/north_island/malaspina/malaspina.htm

Issue Resolution Plan Products

As is the case for Multiple Use Plans, Issue Resolution plans are sensitive to area needs. In the case of the now complete Baynes Sound Coastal Plan for Shellfish Aquaculture, planning units were not created, because the area is more homogeneous, physiographically, than some other areas. Further, the kinds of issues and problems associated with this area necessitated the development of management emphasis areas within the context of the overall plan area to address a range of needs. The following website includes the Baynes Sound Plan in its entirety: http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/rmd/coastal/planning/south_island/baynes/index.htm

In the case of the Cortes Coastal Plan for Shellfish Aquaculture, currently in preparation, the planning unit model is being used because of the heterogeneous nature of the planning area. However, the plan will provide direction for only shellfish aquaculture because that is the key marine issue in the plan area. It is expected that a draft version of the Cortes Plan will be posted at the following website address in the spring of 2003: http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/rmd/coastal/planning/north_island/cortes/cortes.htm

As has been the case for these two plans, the emphasis categories for issue resolution plans are designed specifically for each area.

Plan Process and Consultation

Both types of planning processes involve development of terms of reference, base maps and then the creation of an advisory committee. Each advisory committee is set up by the regional district (local Government) with the assistance of MSRM and functions as a body for dialogue and advice to both the regional district and the province. MSRM also attempts to develop a direct working relationship with First Nations in the plan area. In the early stages of the planning process the project team, led by MSRM staff and composed of staff from other provincial and federal agencies, as required, meets separately with individual First Nations and the advisory committee and also conducts open houses or public meetings to involve the public. This includes a presentation of base maps at their current level of completion, an introduction to the planning process terms of reference, solicitation of local knowledge to augment the information for the plan and identification of issues and concerns.

Following this step there is a period of staff work refining maps, developing aspects of the plan, conducting socio-economic and environmental profiles and drafting planning unit information as described above. With most plans there are often several meetings with the advisory committee and First Nations, as well as individual stakeholder groups. In some cases, First Nations choose to participate in the advisory committees as well as work directly with planning staff. The purpose of these meetings is to refine knowledge about the area, gain a better idea of the issues and potential solutions and to obtain comments and recommendations regarding draft planning unit information. Following an intensive period of technical work and consultation, MSRM posts a draft plan on its website for public review and then meets with First Nations, the advisory committee and the public, again through an open house or public meeting to describe the draft plan and obtain comments. Following a public review period of several weeks, the comments received are used to refine the plan and obtain approval. Throughout the process, close contact with various government agencies is maintained to ensure the Plan meets those agencies requirements.

Link to Canadian Federal Integrated Management Process

The Canadian federal government is currently developing an ecosystem-based process for integrated coastal management (ICM) of coastal areas as part of the implementation of the *Canada Oceans Act*, and the Ocean Management Strategy (Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 2002). The BC coastal planning process is sensitive to the fact that the federal process is still being developed. The provincial planning process cannot wait for the federal process to be completed, because there is an urgent need to address a number of tenuring issues in coastal areas as soon as possible. Provincial coastal plans employ ecosystem boundaries to accommodate future ecosystem based Marine Environmental Quality (MEQ) objectives

developed under the ICM process and are identifying areas that may warrant future protection under a federal/provincial Marine Protected Areas Strategy, once completed. Provincial plans will be flexible enough to be revised, where appropriate, at a later date to incorporate MEQ objectives and other ICM products as developed. The province anticipates that it will be a key player in the federal ICM process.

Reference

Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 2002. Canada's Oceans Strategy, our Oceans, Our Future. Policy and Operational Framework for Integrated Management of Estuarine, Coastal and Marine Environments in Canada. Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Oceans Directorate. Ottawa Ontario. K1A 0E6. 36pp.